

CEM 2022R00076

JTM 03.21.22

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

SEALED

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

BENJAMIN LAWTON,
a/k/a "Rico"

Defendant.

*
* CRIMINAL NO. RDB-22-97
*
* (Sex Trafficking, 18 U.S.C. § 1591(a);
* Interstate Transportation for
* Prostitution, 18 U.S.C. § 2421;
* Enticement to Travel Interstate for
* Purposes of Prostitution, 18 U.S.C.
* § 2422(a); Forfeiture, 18 U.S.C. §§ 924,
* 981, 1594, 2428, 21 U.S.C. § 853, 28
* U.S.C. § 2461)

INDICTMENT

COUNT ONE

(Sex Trafficking by Force, Fraud, and Coercion)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland charges that:

The Defendant

At all times relevant to this Indictment,

1. Defendant **BENJAMIN LAWTON** a/k/a "Rico," born XX/XX/1981, was a resident of Glen Burnie, Maryland.

The Sex Trafficking Victims

2. An adult female ("Victim 1") was a victim of the crimes alleged herein. "Victim 1" was born in 1975. During the relevant time periods alleged herein, Victim 1 resided in Maryland.

3. An adult female ("Victim 2") was a victim of the crimes alleged herein. "Victim 2" and was born in 1985. During the relevant time periods alleged herein, Victim 2 resided in Maryland.

4. An adult female ("Victim 3") was a victim of the crimes alleged herein. "Victim

3” was born in 1977. During the relevant time periods alleged herein, Victim 3 resided in Maryland.

The Charges

Beginning on a date unknown but not later than April 30, 2021, and continuing through on or about September 8, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant

**BENJAMIN LAWTON,
a/k/a “Rico,”**

did knowingly, in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce, recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, maintain, patronize and solicit by any means a person, namely, “Victim 1,” and did benefit financially and by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture engaged in such acts, knowing and in disregard of the fact that means of force, threats of force, fraud and coercion as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 1591(e)(2), and any combination of such means, would be used to cause “Victim 1” to engage in a commercial sex act.

18 U.S.C. § 1591(a)

18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT TWO
(Sex Trafficking – Victim 2)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning on a date unknown but not later than May 15, 2021, and continuing through on or about July 4, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant

BENJAMIN LAWTON,
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly, in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce, recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, maintain, patronize and solicit by any means a person, namely, “Victim 2,” and did benefit financially and by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture engaged in such acts, knowing, and in reckless disregard of the fact, that means of force, threats of force, fraud and coercion as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 1591(e)(2), and any combination of such means, would be used to cause “Victim 2” to engage in a commercial sex act.

18 U.S.C. § 1591(a)

18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT THREE
(Sex Trafficking – Victim 3)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning on a date unknown but not later than January 15, 2022, and continuing through on or about January 20, 2022, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant

BENJAMIN LAWTON,
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly, in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce, recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, maintain, patronize and solicit by any means a person, namely, “Victim 3,” and did benefit financially and by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture engaged in such acts, knowing, and in reckless disregard of the fact, that means of force, threats of force, fraud and coercion as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 1591(e)(2), and any combination of such means, would be used to cause “Victim 3” to engage in a commercial sex act.

18 U.S.C. § 1591(a)

18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT FOUR
(Interstate Transportation for Prostitution)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning in at least April, 2021 and continuing through in or about September, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly and intentionally transport individuals in interstate and foreign commerce with the intent that such individuals engage in prostitution and sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense; to wit, the defendant transported “Victim 1,” between Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere.

18 U.S.C. § 2421
18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT FIVE
(Interstate Transportation for Prostitution)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning in at least May, 2021 and continuing through in or about July, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly and intentionally transport individuals in interstate and foreign commerce with the intent that such individuals engage in prostitution and sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense; to wit, the defendants transported “Victim 2,” between Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere.

18 U.S.C. § 2421
18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT SIX
(Enticement to Travel Interstate for Purposes of Prostitution)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning in at least April, 2021 and continuing through in or about September, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly persuade, induce, entice, and coerce any individual to travel in interstate and foreign commerce to engage in prostitution and sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense; to wit, the defendant persuaded, induced, enticed, and coerced “Victim 1,” to travel between Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., and elsewhere.

18 U.S.C. § 2422(a)
18 U.S.C. § 2

COUNT SEVEN
(Enticement to Travel Interstate for Purposes of Prostitution)

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further charges that:

Beginning in at least May, 2021 and continuing through in or about July, 2021, in the District of Maryland and elsewhere, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a “Rico,”

did knowingly persuade, induce, entice, and coerce any individual to travel in interstate and foreign commerce to engage in prostitution and sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense; to wit, the defendant persuaded, induced, enticed, and coerced “Victim 2,” to travel between Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C., and elsewhere.

18 U.S.C. § 2422(a)
18 U.S.C. § 2

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

The Grand Jury for the District of Maryland further finds that:

1. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 32.2, notice is hereby given to the defendant that the United States will seek forfeiture as part of any sentence in accordance with 18 U.S.C. §§ 1594(d) and 2428(a); 21 U.S.C. § 853(p); and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c) in the event of a conviction on any of the offenses charged in Counts One through Seven of this Indictment.

Sex Trafficking Forfeiture

2. Upon conviction of any of the offenses set forth in Counts One through Three of this Indictment, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a/ "Rico,"

shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1594(d):

a. any property, real or personal, that was involved in, used, or intended to be used to commit or to facilitate the commission of such violation, and any property traceable to such property; and

b. any property, real or personal, constituting or derived from, any proceeds that such person obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of such violation, or any property traceable to such property.

Interstate Transportation and Enticement to Travel for Prostitution Forfeiture

3. Upon conviction of any of the offenses set forth in Counts Four through Seven of this Indictment, the defendant,

BENJAMIN LAWTON
a/k/a "Rico,"

shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2428(a):

- a. any property, real or personal, that was used or intended to be used to commit or to facilitate the commission of such violation; and
- b. any property, real or personal, constituting or derived from any proceeds that such person obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of such violation.

Property Subject to Forfeiture

4. The property to be forfeited includes, but is not limited to, the following items seized on September 8, 2021:

- a. LG cell phone with a crack on the bottom left side of the screen;
- b. Apple iPhone with gold colored trim and a gold/tan back case;
- c. Apple laptop model A2338, serial number C02FM4NGQ05G, and charger;
- d. Sony digital camera with 64 GB Sony memory card;
- e. black Apple iPhone; and
- f. approximately \$20,000 in U.S. currency.

Substitute Assets

5. If, as a result of any act or omission of the defendant, any of the property described above as being subject to forfeiture:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third person;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the Court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property that cannot be subdivided

without difficulty;

the United States shall be entitled to forfeiture of substitute property of the defendant pursuant to

21 U.S.C. § 853(p), as incorporated by 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c).

18 U.S.C. §§ 1594(d), 2428(a)

21 U.S.C. § 853(p)

28 U.S.C. § 2461(c)

A TRUE BILL:

SIGNATURE REDACTED

FOREPERSON

Erek Barron /CEM

Erek Barron

United States Attorney

3/23/2022
DATE